THE HUMAN TORCH

NOV. No. 33

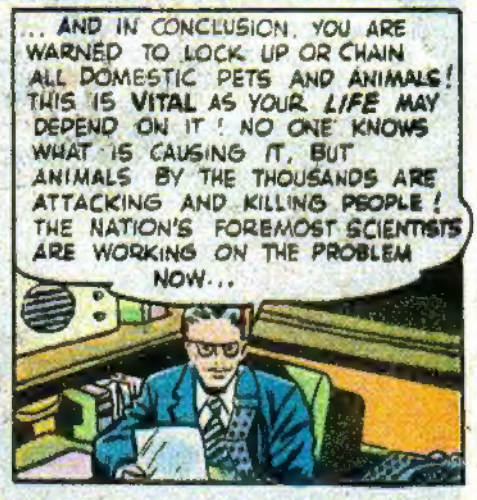
THE HUMAN TORCH
SPECIAL NOTE: YOU'VE JUST READ ONE TITANIC TEAM EFFORT. NOW, HERE'S A MULTI-STAR MINI-EPIC FROM THE FRANTIC 1940'S -- STARRING THE ORIGINAL HUMAN TORCH AND A COUPLE OF COSTUMED COHORTS --!
A STRANGE, UNKNOWN HORROR GRIPS OUR PLANET! ANIMALS ARE GOING MAD--TURNING ON THEIR MASTERS! SOON, HUMANS WILL SUFFER THE SAME EFFECTS AND WITHOUT REASON, WAR ON EACH OTHER! IT CAN HAPPEN! IT DID HAPPEN! WHAT WAS THE TERRIFYING CAUSE OF ALL THIS? THE ANSWER WILL ASTOUND YOU! THIS IS THE STORY OF A POWER SO MONSTROUS, SO OVERWHELMING THAT CAPTAIN AMERICA WAS CALLED IN TO HELP THE HUMAN TORCH AND SUN GIRL IN...
"THE RAY OF MADNESS!"
A FEW ASSORTED, SEEMINGLY UNASSOCIATED EVENTS ARE THE FIRST SIGNALS OF A CATASTROPHE THAT IS TO UNFOLD INTO THE STRANGE UNBELIEVABLE TALE YOU WILL READ NOW! FOR INSTANCE--TAKE THIS PEACEFUL, DOMESTIC CAT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM!
SUDDENLY...
TABBY! TABBY! WHAT'S THE MATTER?
MEOW!

...AND THE MAN'S FACE FREEZES IN HORROR AS HE SEES...

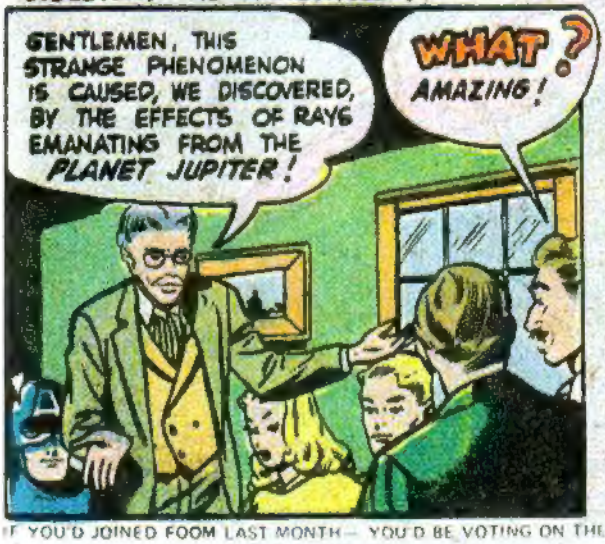
AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A FEW MILES AWAY, A FARMER IS HARNESSING HIS FAITHFUL OLD HORSE TO HIS WAGON!

BUT THE OLD NAG IS SUDDENLY GALVANIZED INTO A FIERY BEAST OF DESTRUCTION!

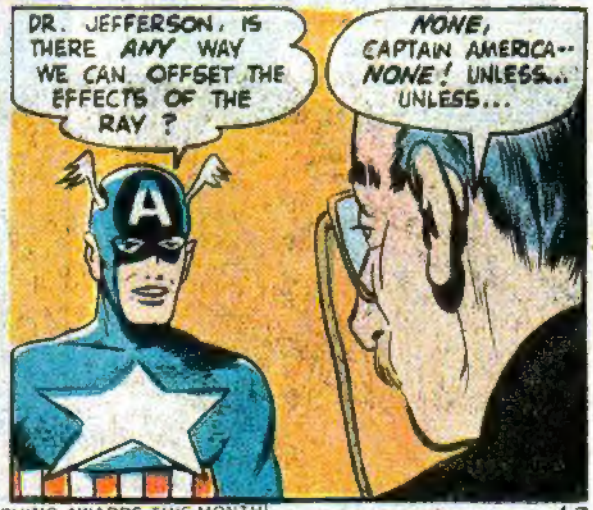
IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE COUNTRY IS STIRRED BY A STRANGE ANNOUNCEMENT!


... AND IN CONCLUSION, YOU ARE WARNED TO LOCK UP OR CHAIN ALL DOMESTIC PETS AND ANIMALS! THIS IS VITAL AS YOUR LIFE MAY DEPEND ON IT! NO ONE KNOWS WHAT IS CAUSING IT, BUT ANIMALS BY THE THOUSANDS ARE ATTACKING AND KILLING PEOPLE! THE NATION'S FOREMOST SCIENTISTS ARE WORKING ON THE PROBLEM NOW...

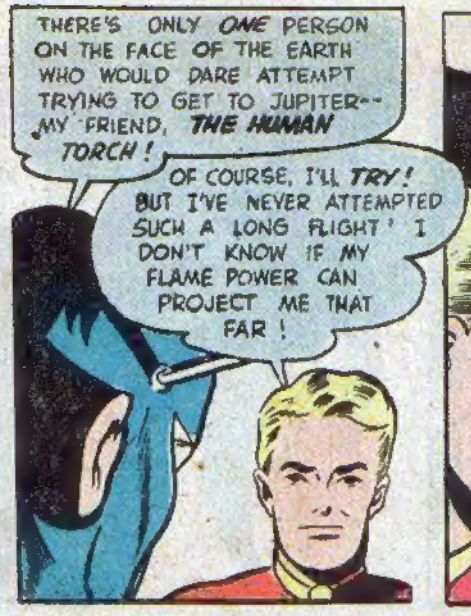
... AND IN THE JEFFERSONIAN INSTITUTE IN NEW YORK CITY, AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY IS ANNOUNCED!


GENTLEMEN, THIS STRANGE PHENOMENON IS CAUSED, WE DISCOVERED, BY THE EFFECTS OF RAYS EMANATING FROM THE PLANET JUPITER!
WHAT? AMAZING!

AMONG THE EXPERTS CALLED IN ARE THE NATION'S ACE TROUBLE-SHOOTERS, CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE HUMAN TORCH, AND SUN GIRL!



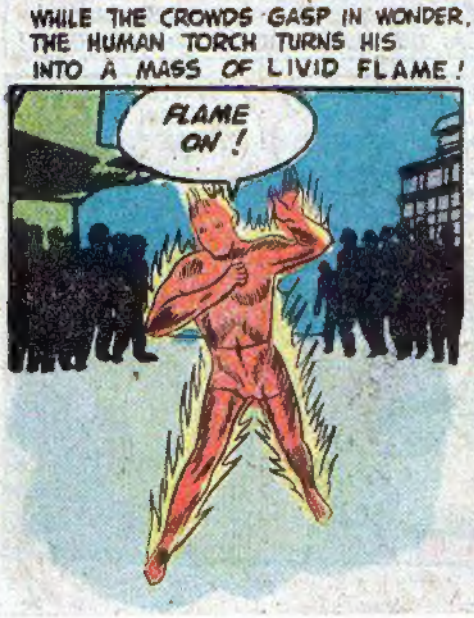
UNLESS IT IS STOPPED AT ITS VERY SOURCE, THE PLANET JUPITER ! BUT THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE* ! WE HAVE NO WAY OF GETTING THERE ! AND OUR CALCULATIONS SHOW THAT THIS RAY WILL SOON AFFECT HUMAN BEINGS ! IN SHORT-- WE WILL ALL GO MAD AND *DESTROY ONE ANOTHER* !

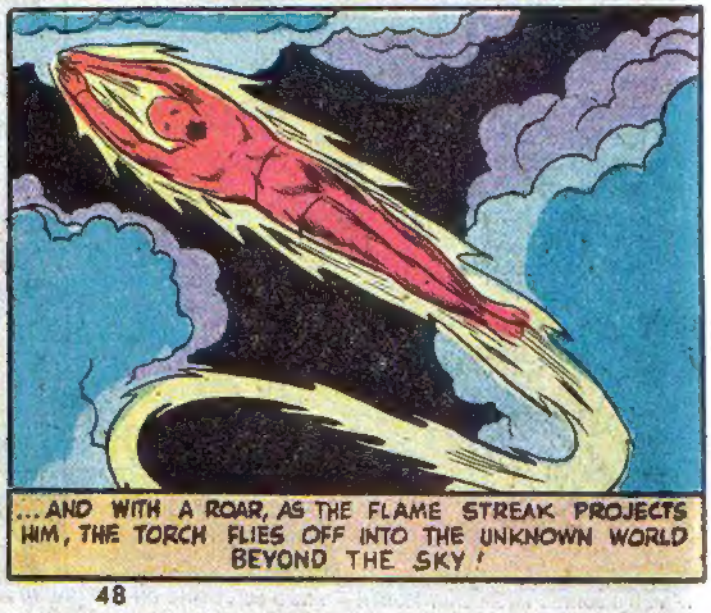

THERE'S ONLY *ONE* PERSON ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH WHO WOULD DARE ATTEMPT TRYING TO GET TO JUPITER-- MY FRIEND, *THE HUMAN TORCH* !
OF COURSE, I'LL *TRY* ! BUT I'VE NEVER ATTEMPTED SUCH A LONG FLIGHT ! I DON'T KNOW IF MY FLAME POWER CAN PROJECT ME THAT FAR !

HOWEVER, IT WILL BE AN HONOR TO TRY !
BLESS YOU TORCH ! THE FATE OF ALL HUMANITY DEPENDS ON YOU !

THE NEXT DAY, A HUGE CROWD GATHERS AT LA GUARDIA AIRPORT TO WATCH THE HUMAN TORCH BEGIN HIS HAZARDOUS FLIGHT !
THE BEST WISHES OF THE ENTIRE WORLD GO WITH YOU, TORCH !
THANKS ! I'LL NEED THEM ! A TRIP TO JUPITER ! I'VE NEVER TRIED ANYTHING LIKE *THIS* BEFORE !

CAPTAIN AMERICA, I MAY NOT RETURN FROM THIS ! I DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT, OF DANGERS I FACE ! BUT IF I DON'T COME BACK-- PLEASE TAKE CARE OF SUN GIRL !
OF COURSE YOU'LL COME BACK, PAL ! GET GOING NOW !
OH, TORCH ! BUT YOU *WILL* COME BACK ! *YOU WILL* !


WHILE THE CROWDS GASP IN WONDER, THE HUMAN TORCH TURNS HIS INTO A MASS OF LIVID FLAME !
FLAME ON !


...AND WITH A ROAR, AS THE FLAME STREAK PROJECTS HIM, THE TORCH FLIES OFF INTO THE UNKNOWN WORLD BEYOND THE SKY !

PLEASE BE MY GUESTS AT MY OBSERVATORY! WE CAN FOLLOW AT LEAST PART OF THE TORCH'S PROGRESS FROM THERE!

GOOD IDEA! THANKS!

I'M REALLY WORRIED ABOUT HIM! HE'S NEVER TRIED ANYTHING LIKE *THIS*!

YES, WE CAN'T TELL JUST WHAT *WILL* HAPPEN UP THERE IN THE STRATOSPHERE! I JUST HOPE HE CAN SURVIVE TO TELL US!

MEANWHILE, THE TORCH IS ZOOMING HIGH ABOVE THE CLOUDS!

SO FAR-- SO GOOD! MY FLAME POWER IS STILL QUITE STRONG! HERE'S HOPING!

BUT ON THE PLANET JUPITER, THERE IS ACTIVITY, TOO-- ACTIVITY THAT IS TO BRING THE HUMAN TORCH FACE TO FACE WITH ASTOUNDING ADVENTURE!

FOR HERE IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THE TROUBLE-- THE RED HOT POOL OF PERIL-- FROM WHICH COMES THE RAY OF MADNESS!

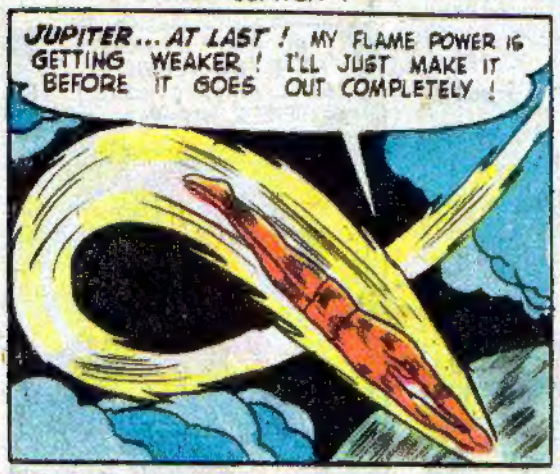
SUDDENLY!

DANGER! DANGER! BEWARE! SOME FORCE IS DRAWING CLOSE TO OUR POOL-- OUR LIFE-GIVING *POOL OF MADNESS!*

OH, KLEEZAR, OUR LEADER, OUR MASTER! SAVE US!

FOR AGES WE HAVE SURVIVED ON THE FIERY WATERS OF THIS POOL! WITHOUT IT, WE, THE NOMAD CREATURES OF MADNESS, THE PARASITES OF THE UNIVERSE, *CANNOT EXIST!* COME, HIDE BEHIND THE ROCKS! WE SHALL SEE WHAT COMES TO THREATEN US!

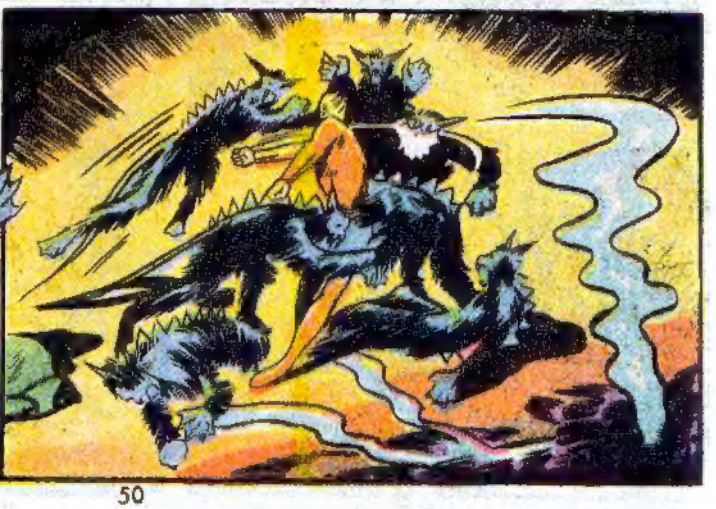
UNAWARE OF THE GREAT PERIL THAT AWAITS HIM, THE TORCH IS MAKING RAPID PROGRESS AS HE DRAWS NEAR TO JUPITER !



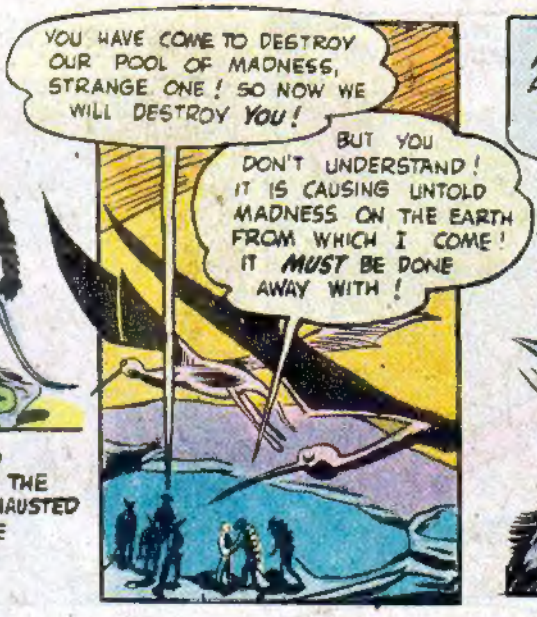
THE RAY OF MADNESS! THIS IS IT! I'VE FOUND IT! I CAN FEEL ITS POWER!
THAT IS OUR ENEMY ! THAT IS THE ONE WE MUST DESTROY IF WE ARE TO SURVIVE !
YES, MASTER ! AS YOU SAY !

BUT IT'S CAUSED BY THE RED-HOT WATERS OF THIS POOL ! I MUST WAIT UNTIL MY FLAME-POWER COMES BACK TO ME BEFORE I CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT !

THE HUMAN TORCH FIGHTS VALIANTLY AGAINST INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS, FOR WITHOUT HIS FLAME HE IS NO MATCH FOR THESE CREATURES OF HORROR !

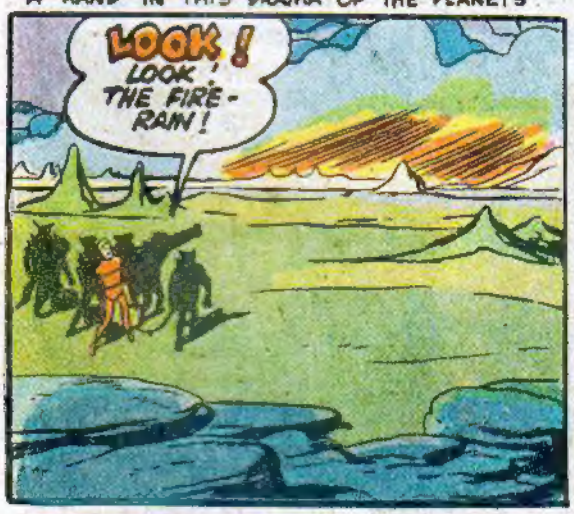


BUT TORCH'S CRY IS OF NO USE! THE LONG TRIP FROM THE EARTH HAS COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED THE FLAME-POWER OF THE FIGHTING MAN OF FIRE!


YOU HAVE COME TO DESTROY OUR POOL OF MADNESS, STRANGE ONE! SO NOW WE WILL DESTROY YOU!
BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! IT IS CAUSING UNTOLD MADNESS ON THE EARTH FROM WHICH I COME! IT MUST BE DONE AWAY WITH!

FIE ON YOUR EARTH PEOPLE! WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT THEM? WITHOUT THE FIERY WATERS OF THE POOL, WE, THE SCAVENGERS OF THE STRATOSPHERE, WILL BE NO MORE! SO YOU, EARTH-MAN, MUST GO TO A SWIFT END!

BUT ANOTHER FORCE ENTERS TO TAKE A HAND IN THIS DRAMA OF THE PLANETS!

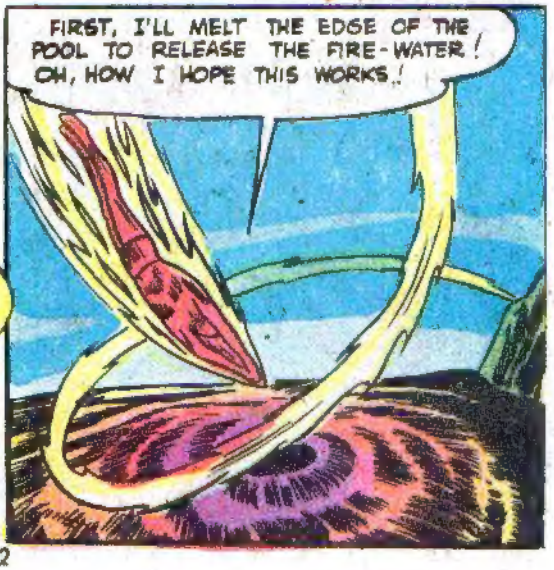


FIRE-RAIN! DEADLY, HOT PELLETS OF MOLTEN FIRE, LEFT OVER FROM THE CONSTANT FORMATION OF THE PLANETS OF THE UNIVERSE--THE ONE DESTRUCTIVE TERROR THAT CAN THREATEN ALL INFINITY!

MARVEL VALUE STAMPS! ONE MORE REASON WHY VALUE IS MARVEL'S MIDDLE NAME!

AS SUDDENLY AS IT BEGAN THE FIRE-RAIN STOPS!

BUT SUDDENLY THE FLAME-POWER RETURNS TO THE TORCH AT THE VERY LAST SECOND!



NOW FOR THE LAST AND MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS ADVENTURE--MY TRIP HOME! OH, LET MY FLAME LAST! LET IT STAY UNTIL I RETURN TO EARTH!

HEY 'S KA-ZAR 'S SAVAGE TALES #5? PICK UP A COPY AND BE SHOCKED!

MEANWHILE, IN DR. JEFFERSON'S OBSERVATORY, A TENSE GROUP HAS BEEN SPENDING AN ANXIOUS TIME!
ANY SIGN OF HIM YET, CAPTAIN AMERICA?
NONE! AND IT'S BEEN HOURS SINCE HE LEFT! I'M REALLY WORRIED!
AT LEAST HE'S DESTROYED THE RAY! THINGS ARE BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN HERE ON EARTH!
BUT--HIS FLAME! WE DON'T KNOW IF IT WILL STAY LONG ENOUGH TO...
WAIT! LOOK! HERE HE COMES!
AND HERE IS WHAT THE RELIEVED GROUP SEES!
JUST A LITTLE MORE! JUST A LITTLE MORE--AND I'LL MAKE IT!
BUT THE OPTIMISM IS SHORT-LIVED, FOR...
JUST A LITTLE MORE--GOOD HEAVENS! IT'S GOING OFF! I'M LOSING MY FLAME!
HIS FLAME IS OFF! HE'S GOING TO BE KILLED UNLESS I CAN HELP HIM!
B-BUT--NOW? WHAT CAN YOU DO? YOU'RE ONLY A MORTAL, CAPTAIN! YOU CAN'T DO THE IMPOSSIBLE!
OOOOH! THIS IS MY FINISH! AT LEAST I WAS ABLE TO DESTROY THE RAY! CAPTAIN AMERICA! SUN GIRL! GOOD-BY!

NO, I'M NOT A SUPER-BEING! BUT I HAVE STRENGTH--AND LOYALTY FOR A FRIEND! IF THE TORCH DIES--IF I CAN'T SAVE HIM--I'LL DIE, TOO!
GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN TO RISK HIS LIFE FOR A FRIEND! CAPTAIN AMERICA BRACES HIMSELF TO TRY TO BREAK THE SPINE-TINGLING DOWNWARD PLUNGE OF THE HUMAN TORCH!
CAPT--OH!
KPLUNK!
UGH!
OOH! I CAN'T LOOK!
CAP! TORCH! OH! THEY'RE BOTH DEAD!
BUT CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE HUMAN TORCH ARE MADE OF STRONGER STUFF!
CAP! YOU SAVED MY LIFE!
FORGET IT! SAY! DO YOU KNOW YOU GAINED WEIGHT?
YOU TWO ARE THE BRAVEST MEN ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH!
BUT THE TORCH IS ALSO THE BRAVEST MAN ON ANY OTHER PLANET, TOO!
AND ONCE AGAIN, THANKS TO THE DEATH-DEFYING ADVENTURE OF THE HUMAN TORCH, THE UNIVERSE IS RESTORED TO ITS NORMAL WAY OF EXISTENCE!
THE END

THE HUMAN TORCH

NOSTALGIC NOTE: LONG BEFORE JOHNNY STORM AND FRIENDS TOOK THAT FATEFUL SPACE-TREK, THERE WAS ANOTHER HUMAN TORCH, WHO HELD FORTH IN 1940'S -- THE SO-CALLED GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS! HE'S POPPED UP NOW AND AND THEN IN RECENT YEARS, BUT HERE'S ONE OF HIS VINTAGE ADVENTURES -- (TWO TORCHES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE! WHO SAYS VALUE ISN'T MARVEL'S MIDDLE NAME?)
WHAT IS IT? CAN IT BE POSSIBLE? THAT'S WHAT EVERYBODY, INCLUDING THE HUMAN TORCH, WANTED TO KNOW, WHEN THE SIGHT GREETED THEIR AMAZED EYES! YOU'LL FIND OUT, TOO, WHEN YOU READ...
HORROR HOTEL!

STUDY THIS PICTURE CAREFULLY, READER! IT IS A PLACID SCENE IN THE EVERY-DAY LIFE OF THE DIGNIFIED HOTEL WALTON! PEACEFUL, ISN'T IT? BUT HOLD ON TO YOUR SEATS, BECAUSE... HERE WE GO!
HELP!

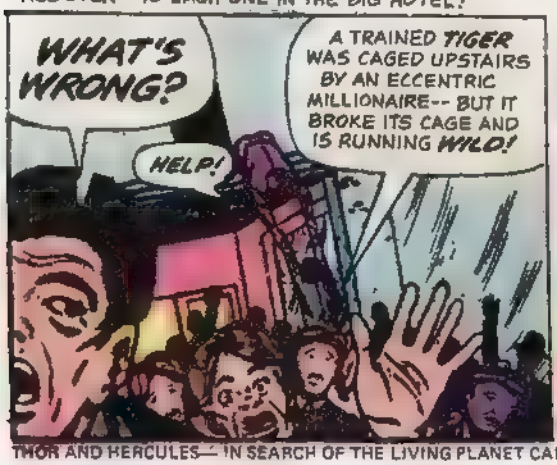
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

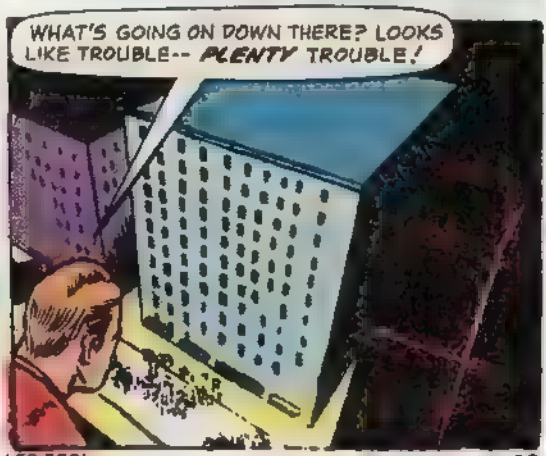
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! SEND SOMEONE UP FOR MY THINGS! I'M NOT SPENDING ANOTHER NIGHT IN THIS HORRIBLE PLACE!
MY DEAR FELLOW, EXPLAIN YOURSELF, PLEASE! OUR HOTEL HAS AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION!

RUMOR! THE STATEMENTS OF THE UNIFORMED AND UNKNOWING! SENSELESS, MEANINGLESS PHRASES GROWING OUT OF FEAR AND ILLOGIC! THE STRANGE PANIC OF THE HOTEL GUEST SENDS THE OTHERS RUNNING PELL-MELL INTO THE STREETS, AS THE CONTASION OF PANIC SPREADS ALL OVER--TO EACH ONE IN THE BIG HOTEL!

MONSTER? THE MAN MUST BE MAD!
IT'S RUNNING WILD! IT'LL KILL US ALL!
RUNNING WILD? WHAT'S RUNNING WILD?
IT MUST BE A WILD BEAST! IMAGINE A BEAST RUNNING WILD IN THIS HOTEL!

AND OF ALL THESE FEAR-CRAZED PEOPLE, ONLY ONE WAS CALM! ONE WHO WATCHED FROM A HIGH VANTAGE PO NT, SAFE FROM THE FEARFUL SCENE OF BLIND TERROR! BUT CURIOUS ABOUT ALL EVENTS GOING ON BELOW-- THE HUMAN TORCH!


WHAT'S WRONG?
HELP!
A TRAINED TIGER WAS CAGED UPSTAIRS BY AN ECCENTRIC MILLIONAIRE-- BUT IT BROKE ITS CAGE AND IS RUNNING WILD!



UTTERING TWO WORDS, THE FIGURE BURSTS INTO A BLAZE OF FIRE!
FLAME ON!
EEEK-K! LOOK!
THE HUMAN TORCH!
MAYBE HE CAN ROUND UP THE MAN-KILLING BEAST!.
MAN-KILLING BEAST? IN A HOTEL?
THE MAN OF FLAME TURNS OFF HIS FIRE AND FACES THE WILD THRONG!
CALM DOWN! I'M GOING TO HELP YOU! DON'T BE PANICKY! WILL SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT'S WRONG?
THE BEASTS WILL DESTROY US!
THEY'VE ALREADY KILLED A MAN!
THEY'LL KILL US ALL!
THAT'S HARD TO BELIEVE! WHO ACTUALLY SAW THEM?
HE SAW THEM-- HEY! WHERE IS HE?
I HEARD THEY WERE TREMENDOUS!
SOMEONE MUST HAVE SEEN THEM!
YES! AND THEY'RE STILL IN THE HOTEL! DON'T STAND HERE-- THEY'LL DESTROY US!
SWIFTLY, TORCH FORMS A RING OF FIRE AROUND THE COLOSSAL CROWD...
YES! LET'S GET AWAY!
WHA-? HE'S MAKING A RING OF FIRE AROUND US!
WE CAN'T GET AWAY! HE'LL BURN US ALIVE!
NO I WON'T! I JUST WANT TO KEEP YOU FOLKS FROM GOING BERSERK! I'LL FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

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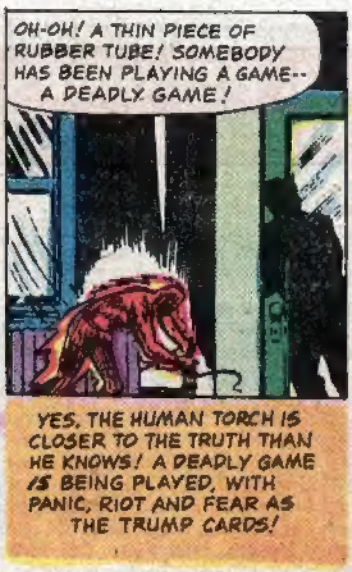
IF YOU CAN! OH, SIR, IF YOU ONLY CAN!
BUT HOW CAN YOU? THEY'RE BEASTS-- MONSTERS!
LEAVE THAT TO ME! YOU PEOPLE WAIT HERE!
SUDDENLY.
LOOK! LOOK!
THE HORROR-STRICKEN EYES OF THE CROWD LOOK UP TO SEE A TERRIFYING SIGHT! WHAT KIND OF MONSTER IS THIS?
HELP! THERE'S ONE OF THEM!
SEE? I TOLD YOU I SAW IT!
WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION, THE TORCH FLAMES INTO ACTION!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS-- BUT HERE GOES!
NEARER AND NEARER TO THE MONSTROUS TWINS, STREAKS THE MAN OF FLAME!
LOOK OUT! YOU HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE!
BOOM
IT'S GONE! EXPLODED INTO NOTHINGNESS!



YES, THE HUMAN TORCH IS CLOSER TO THE TRUTH THAN HE KNOWS! A DEADLY GAME IS BEING PLAYED, WITH PANIC, RIOT AND FEAR AS THE TRUMP CARDS!

HE WASN'T TOO CLEVER, WHOEVER IT WAS! HE DEPENDED ON THE PANIC TO DO HIS WORK FOR HIM! I WON'T NEED THIS FLAME ON ANY MORE! FLAME OFF!

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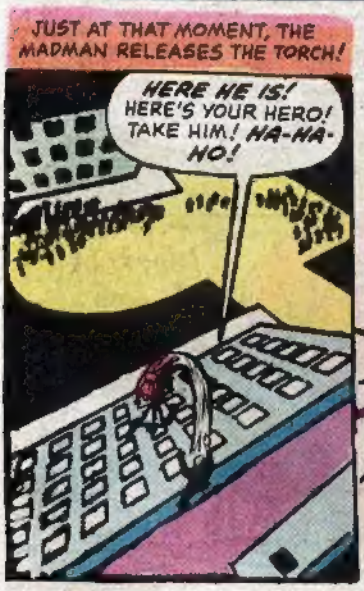
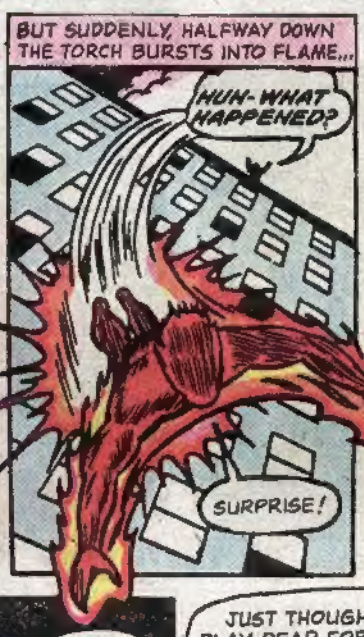
I THOUGHT MY ORIGINAL PLAN WAS GOOD! BUT THIS IS BETTER-- AH, HOW PERFECT!
TORCH! WHERE ARE YOU, TORCH?
HIGHER AND HIGHER CLIMBS THE REVENGE-MAD MERCER, WITH A DIABOLICAL SCHEME BREWING IN HIS CRACKED MIND!
TO THINK THAT I SHOULD BE THE ONE TO DESTROY THE HUMAN TORCH! WHAT A FEATHER IN MY CAP THIS WILL BE! THE WHOLE WORLD WILL ACCLAIM ME!
AND DOWN BELOW, THE POLICE HUNT FRANTICALLY FOR THE TORCH!
ANY SIGN OF HIM?
NONE AT ALL, CAPTAIN! WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?
UPSTAIRS, MEN! WE DON'T KNOW WHAT MADMAN IS LOOSE IN THIS HOTEL AND THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT SPOT THE TORCH IS IN! WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM! QUICK, LET'S GO!
UT...
NOW TO REALLY CAP MY ACT! I'LL TEACH 'EM TO FIRE ME!
LOOK, YOU FOOLS! LOOK AT WHAT I'M GOING TO DO!

THIS IS THE FINISH OF YOUR HERO THE HUMAN TORCH! PREPARE TO WELCOME HIM INTO YOUR ARMS!

THAT VOICE! IT'S MERCER! WE FIRED HIM TODAY FOR PETTY THIEVERY!
HE'S GOING TO THROW THE TORCH DOWN!
STOP HIM! HE'S CRAZY!


JUST AT THAT MOMENT, THE MADMAN RELEASES THE TORCH!
HERE HE IS! HERE'S YOUR HERO! TAKE HIM! HA-HA-HO!


BUT SUDDENLY, HALFWAY DOWN THE TORCH BURSTS INTO FLAME...
HUH-WHAT HAPPENED?
SURPRISE!

...AND ZOOMED BACK TOWARD THE AMAZED MERCER!
NO-NO-NO! STAY AWAY FROM ME!
TRY TO KILL ME, EH? WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!

HE'S SAFE! THE TORCH IS SAFE!
WOW! LOOK AT HIM GO!
ATTA BOY! GO GET HIM!

JUST THOUGHT I'D PLAY DEAD FOR AWHILE AND SEE--HEY, COME BACK HERE!

MERCER RUNS MADLY TOWARD THE EDGE OF THE ROOF!
GOT TO STOP HIM, QUICK!
YOU WON'T GET ME ALIVE! I'LL KILL MYSELF FIRST!

GOT IT!
GOOD-BY, EVERYBODY!

THE HEAT OF TORCH'S BODY MELTS THE SIDE OF THE GIANT WATER-TANK, RELEASING ITS PENT-UP FURY...
SPLASH!
AND THE HEAVY SPRAY FROM THE TANK STOPS HIM!

THE TORCH GOES BACK TO HIS NATURAL FORM!
OKAY, FELLA! LET'S GO DOWN AND FACE THE MUSIC!
OH-H-H!

I WAS FIRED FROM THIS HOTEL AND I WANTED TO GET EVEN BY SCARING THE GUESTS! WASN'T I CLEVER?
CRAZY-- YOU MEAN!
WE'VE GOT A LITTLE PLACE UPSTATE FOR GUYS LIKE YOU! LET'S GO!

HE RIGGED UP THAT GIANT BALLOON OUT OF THE WINDOW, FIGURING IT WOULD SCARE EVERYBODY AWAY AND RUIN THE HOTEL! A WARPED MIND CAN DO WARPED THINGS!
IT ALMOST WORKED! IT ALMOST WORKED!
FUNNY, WHAT A GUY'LL DO FOR REVENGE!

SO LONG-- PERHAPS THIS EXPERIENCE WILL BE A LESSON TO THESE PEOPLE ON THE DANGER OF PANIC AND RUMOR!
I CERTAINLY HOPE SO, TORCH! A LOT OF PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE BEEN HURT OR KILLED JUST BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN IMAGINATIONS!
WANNA SEE MORE OF THE ORIGINAL HUMAN TORCH? LET US KNOW, NOSTALGIA BUFF!
THE END